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## Income Supports Meeting Notes

**TO:**

All Income Supports Workgroup  
Members

**FROM:**

David McConnell, Public Policy  
Associates

**SUBJECT:**

Income Supports Workgroup Meeting  
Notes November 11, 2008

**DATE:**

November 18, 2008

### *Items Relevant to Other Workgroups*

- *PIMIT:* The benefits software system will be of interest to the PIMIT group.
- *Training:* SOAR training will also be of interest to the Training group.
- *Communication:* Educating the consumer might be something to mention to the Communications group.

Public Policy Research,

Development,

and Evaluation

### *Attendees*

- Stacey Smith
- Scott Dzurka
- Elizabeth Kline
- David McConnell

### *Discussion Items*

- Review of draft Action Plan
  - Format of Action Plan will be changed.
    - ◆ Dropping "Milestones" column and adding a column for tracking progress.
- Original draft Action Plan was focused on increasing SOAR training.
  - This meeting will focus on gathering more input to address further aspects of the strategic issues.
- Scott D. talked about an evaluation of benefits software systems that the United Way is spearheading. They are looking for the right system for Michigan that will make it easier to complete the necessary paperwork to access benefits.
  - Filling out the forms takes a long time.
  - It is projected that there are about 900 million dollars in federal benefits that are not captured.
    - ◆ Mostly in food stamps.

Jeffrey D. Padden

President

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- They are not looking for a replacement for existing software.
  - Should be a database everyone can tap into; to alleviate some paperwork and make forms cleaner.
  - An individual would not have to fill out separate forms. There would be an auto-fill feature and a benefits calculator.
  - They have acquired a grant from the Kellogg Foundation and will come back with some recommendations for systems by the end of January.
  - It will be necessary to determine the cost of the system and whether smaller agencies will be able to afford it.
  - It was suggested that the evaluation and recommendations might be added to the Action Plan.
- We should identify someone from the group to meet with United Way staff and monitor the implementation of the software system.
- Stacy will send out a request to the Income Supports group to see who is available.
  - Scott will send Stacey a list of meeting dates.
  - We will want to identify the group member quickly, but for now Scott will fill that role.
- People are not always aware of what benefits they are entitled.
- Educating consumers about available benefits is an important step.
    - ◆ The software might help to alleviate the lack of information people have about benefits available to them.
  - The need to educate the consumer and barriers to that education could also be actionable items.
  - We could work on identifying best practices/promising approaches that groups around the country have used to educate consumers.
- VA Benefits
- There is a need to educate people about how to get set up with VA.
  - Perhaps there needs to be a resource group?
  - Could there be an all-day training meeting to get everyone up to speed?
  - It is not clear whether the software system would be linked to VA forms.
    - ◆ The current online application is complicated.
- SOAR training
- Rural counties might not be receiving training.
  - People ask about trainings, but when they try to attend one there are not the numbers to actually do the trainings.
  - Barriers
    - ◆ The original trainers have not gotten back together since June 2007.
    - ◆ Loss of trainers (so where there were three, there might now be one).
    - ◆ Trainers have not had in-depth conversations with SOAR leads from SSA office.
  - Maybe there could be regional trainings.
- We should be developing the Action Plan via e-mail between now and the next Income Supports workgroup meeting.

- We will need to have further discussions about the best practices.
  - How and where do you look for them?

### ***Tasks Completed***

- Reviewed Action Plan
- Discussed changes and updates
- Identified some possible new actions

### ***Tasks Assigned***

- Stacey to recruit a group member to attend the United Way evaluation meetings.
  - Scott will fill that role for now.
  - Scott will get Stacey a list of meeting dates.
- Dave will update the Action Plan and send to Stacey along with meeting notes.
- Everyone should be actively involved in developing the Action Plan, with a focus on taking some first steps before the end of the year.

### ***Next Meeting***

- Tuesday, December 2, 2008
  - 10:00-11:30 a.m.